



U.S. Department
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News Release

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Washington, D.C. -- President Clinton and Americans throughout the country are preparing Veterans Day ceremonies Nov. 11 that recognize the contributions our nation's servicemen and women have made to the cause of peace and freedom.

"From the events leading to the revolution for independence until today, nearly 42 million men and women have presented themselves, ready to sacrifice their lives that all who live in this great country would have the blessings of liberty," the President said. "There are more than 25 million living veterans who have served this nation in times of war and peace. Today, in one of the most prosperous and enlightened eras of our sovereign nation, we should pause to reflect upon the sacrifices of all those who have served in uniform."

Department of Veterans Affairs Acting Secretary Hershel Gober said, "We must never allow ourselves to forget that America, as we know it, exists because of the sacrifices of our veterans. We can never repay them for all that they have endured, but we can gather on Veterans Day to express our appreciation and gratitude."

In Washington, the annual Veterans Day observance will be held at Arlington National Cemetery. The traditional wreath-laying ceremony will take place at 11:00 a.m. at the Tomb of the Unknowns. It was at that hour on Nov. 11, 1918, that World War I hostilities ended. The day later became known as "Armistice Day," but in 1954 Congress renamed it Veterans Day to honor all those who served in America's Armed Forces.

The program, open to the general public, is sponsored by the Veterans Day National Committee, composed of Washington-based representatives of national veterans organizations. The American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc., a national veterans service organization, will host this year's activities at Arlington.

This year's program will feature patriotic music by the U.S. Air Force Band and the Air Force's Singing Sergeants.

Gober pointed out that while Arlington captures much of the national attention on Veterans Day, the rest of the nation's observances are just as meaningful. To support nationwide activities, VA has asked governors to name Veterans Day chairpersons to coordinate state observances and to work with service organizations, military officials and communities planning parades, ceremonies and other events.

The Veterans Day National Committee has designated the following sites for official regional Veterans Day observances: Birmingham and Mobile, Ala.; San Leandro and San Jose, Calif.; New Castle, Del.; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; New Orleans; Brunswick, Md.; St. Louis; Columbus, Ohio; Mid-Willamette Valley and Douglas County, Ore.; Nashville, Tenn.; Bonham, Texas; Salt Lake City; Port Angeles, Auburn and Vancouver, Wash.; and Milwaukee.

The committee also has sent a variety of materials to state and civic organizations and to more than 107,000 schools encouraging greater awareness of and involvement in Veterans Day.